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STATE OF MAINE

**TREATMENT  
OF THE  
FEMALE OFFENDER**

**Some Considerations, Ideas, Recommendations  
and Speculations Regarding a  
State-Wide Revision of Program**

BY

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TREATMENT OF THE FEMALE OFFENDER

IN THE

STATE OF MAINE

Miss Ward E. Murphy, Superintendent  
Stevens School  
and  
Women's Correctional Center

This report was written for the benefit of those who CARE about what happens to the girl or woman who is in conflict with the law. The information and recommendations made here will hopefully clarify:

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September, 1968.

T R E A T M E N T   O F   T H E   F E M A L E   O F F E N D E R

Considerations, Ideas, Recommendations, and Speculations  
Regarding a State-Wide Revision of Program.

Ward E. Murphy, Superintendent  
Stevens School and  
Women's Correctional Center

Since affiliating with the Department of Mental Health and Corrections in July of 1961, much has been said, written, and recommended, regarding the over-all treatment of the female offender in the State of Maine. Within the past year, various commissions, committees, organizations, and individuals have assumed responsibility for attempting to put these into a concrete and useable format for serious consideration.

Many of the suggestions seem sound to me, as a correctional specialist, and should be implemented if possible, as soon as possible. Some are good ideas as they relate to one particular problem, but the solution leaves many other areas uncovered completely or adversely effected. Some of the recommendations are completely against my concept of professional corrections, and would not in any way, meet the requirements for the realistic and necessary treatment of the offender.

Suggestions have ranged from strict dollar-savings (unrelated to program effectiveness or to the whole purpose of treatment), to the other extreme of a fully professionalized program, approaching the treatment of the offender with all present-day tools of knowledge and program opportunities.

At different times, I have heard that the Women's Correctional Center or the Stevens School should be closed, with the students or inmates all moved to the alternate campus; that we need a Reception, Diagnostic and Treatment Center for juveniles as well as for adults; that female felons be transferred out of State; that certain women (possibly those over 21 years old) be committed to a jail rather than to a State correctional facility. There have been other recommendations made, but those listed here are the ones most frequently discussed at the present time.

To discuss these recommendations fully, with all their ramifications, would take a text-book-size volume and it still would not be complete in its coverage. To condense some of my thinking, I have broken the subject into a variety of areas, and scratched the surface slightly, to give a framework for discussion. These include: Defining the female offender in our State - Whom are we talking about? What are the present options of the court in sentencing this offender? What are the responsibilities and goals of any correctional institution? The two facilities now serving the female offender, Skowhegan and Hallowell; recommendations for a professional approach to treatment of the female offender in the State of Maine.

THE FEMALE OFFENDER - Whom are we talking about?

The person under discussion here, is a girl or woman, charged on a specific offense in accord with established statute, who has appeared before a Judge in this State, and has been determined as guilty of that charge by the court. This would be regardless of her age, legal status as a juvenile or an adult, or the type of offense committed. If a juvenile, she has been adjudicated as a juvenile offender. If an adult, she has been convicted for a specific offense. After such a determination has been made by the court, the Judge must make some disposition of each case.

## THE PRESENT OPTIONS OF THE COURT

For the Juvenile: In the State of Maine, the statutory provisions allow much flexibility in the disposition of a juvenile offender. The Judge may elect to return the child to the supervision of her parents, or to another responsible adult. He could elect to place her in a foster home, possibly under the supervision of the Child Welfare Division or a Probation and Parole Officer. He could also elect to commit her to the Stevens School, or to almost any other plan which would seem to be the most beneficial to the child, the community, or the circumstances.

The responsibility of the Judge, at the time of disposition, is to determine which of his alternatives will best meet the needs of that particular child at that particular time.

For the Adult: Dependent upon the nature of the offense, the offender, and her circumstance, the Judge may sentence a woman to the Women's Correctional Center, to the Maine State Prison, or to a County Jail; he may suspend sentence and place the woman on probation for a specific length of time; and in certain cases he may elect to file the case for an indefinite period, postponing the sentence pending any further violations or anti-social behavior in the community.

Those women placed on probation will come under one of four women Probation and Parole Officers in the State. These officers are well qualified, knowledgeable and trained for their jobs, and each of them reflects full dedication to her work. These same four officers supervise all women parolees, all entrustment cases from Stevens School, juvenile and adult female probation cases, and serve the court, when requested, to do pre-sentence investigations and reports. Travel time alone consumes a major part of their work week, and it must be presumed that it is impossible to supervise any of the individuals on their caseload at the level that they know is needed.

For the Adult: - (Cont.)

Those women who are sentenced for short periods of time to a County Jail (ANYWHERE in our State), are just putting in time, relieving the community of their presence for a while, meeting the time requirement for custody, and returning to the same community a little older, a little more bitter, and regardless of their situation the first time they were sentenced to jail, they are now one of the 90% of all persons sentenced to jail who will RETURN to the court to face another sentence on another offense. Jails are a necessary requirement in our society, to function as HOLDING agencies, for those individuals awaiting disposition of their cases. There is no jail in Maine which can offer long-range treatment for the offender. Their inmate population is small, with frequent turnover. The sheriff of any county is responsible primarily for apprehension of the offender, and his training should be geared in this area. Even if he were also a professionally trained correctional specialist, the cost of required treatment programs for his small group is almost prohibitive. The even smaller number of female offenders in a jail at any one time (often none, and except in the larger city areas, seldom more than three at any one time), precludes any attempt at meeting their needs. As stated, they just put in time.

If the judge elects to sentence a woman or girl to the Women's Correctional Center at Skowhegan, she could remain there for a maximum of three (3) years. All sentences have an indeterminate minimum, and release prior to the expiration of her sentence can be made only through action of the Parole Board, when the Board determines that she has changed or adjusted enough to be able to get along satisfactorily in the community. EVERY GIRL AND WOMAN admitted to the institution since I have been here (1961) has been given opportunity for serving a portion of her sentence under Parole supervision in the community. MOST of these individuals make a successful adjustment when finally discharged, and less than 10%

For the Adult: - (Cont.)

of them have returned with a new sentence for another offense. (Of that low percentage, most of them were for misdemeanor charges related to problems of drinking, or morals offenses.) For your information and reference, (NOT including those women sentenced to Maine State Prison) the median age at the time of admission to the Women's Correctional Center is slightly over eighteen (18) years of age.

All women who, by the nature of their offense, are sentenced to the Maine State Prison, serve their sentences at the Women's Correctional Center. The small number involved, and the different requirements of treatment needed for women, made it unfeasible to keep them at Thomaston; necessary legislation was passed during the 1930's, permitting this transfer. Any serious felony offense could result in a Maine State Prison sentence, rather than to the Women's Correctional Center. In sentencing a woman to prison, the Judge establishes a minimum and maximum time, the minimum period never for more than one-half of the maximum, and often less. (eg.: 5 to 10, 10 to 20, 5 to 20, 1 to 5 years.) Since July, 1961, less than seven percent (7%) of all new admissions were State Prison sentences, with an average age at admission of 36 years, 6 months, and, with two exceptions, an average sentence of from two to six and one-half years. The two exceptions were one lifer, in on the charge of murder, and one woman with a seven and one-half to twenty year sentence, in on the charge of manslaughter.

Of all women sentenced to Maine State Prison, only three of them had previously served a sentence at the Women's Correctional Center, two of these more than FIFTEEN YEARS prior to their present sentence, and for an entirely different offense.



CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Their Reason for Existence, Their Function and Responsibilities, and Their Goals.

Their Reason for Existence: Without attempting to use a text-book or legal definition about correctional institutions, I would define them as a resident setting for the confinement of an individual who has committed an act, or has been involved in a situation, which is in violation of the law, and the court has determined that they should not be allowed to remain in their own community, for the protection of that community, or its citizens, or for the general welfare.

The Function and Responsibilities of Institutions:

Any individual sentenced to an institution for any period of time, is there AS a punishment, not FOR punishment. We are in the SALVAGE business, not the JUNK business, and our product is the human being. The obligation of any person working in the field of corrections is to use every known tool he can make available for treating the individual so that he can return to the level of society in which he will live, better able to cope with the realistic demands of that environment, within acceptable behavior limits, and hopefully a contributing member of his own society. This should be accomplished in as short a time as possible within the institution proper, with extended supervision in the community to follow-up with a treatment plan.

It is not possible to treat "a crime" -- we are treating the individual offender, the offender with a problem. Institutions must furnish strict custody for those who are dangerous to themselves or to others, they must furnish the basic requirements for living, the place to sleep, food, opportunities for cleanliness, and something to consume "free" time. These items are required anywhere - but they DO NOT SOLVE THE PROBELM that the individual brought in with him.

## The Function and Responsibilities of Institutions: - (Cont.)

A professionally trained Classification team, with all knowledge about each person available, can set up a realistic program for the individual with regard to his problem areas, and give the person opportunity to do something about the areas, after they are identified. The offender can then be assisted in achieving realistic goals, which are usually much more satisfying to the person, beneficial (and much less expensive) to the community, and can possibly add one more contributing citizen to society as a tax-payer instead of a tax-consumer.

## THE GOALS OF AN INSTITUTION TREATMENT PROGRAM

There are four traditional goals of imprisonment for the adult offender, which are quite basic to the public concept of confinement:

Punishment: To satisfy the public's need for justice. The individual is deprived of his or her freedom, not FOR punishment, but AS a punishment.

Incapacitation: This is the "cooling off period" for both society and the individual. It is a period of observation.

Deterrence: While the person is in an institution, that person, alone, is deterred from committing another public offense. It has never been confirmed by ANY source that giving a sentence or a fine to one person will deter another individual from committing a similar offense; the concept, while often cited, is ineffective and not valid. Where the drive for criminality is weak, deterrence is strong; where the drive for criminality is strong, deterrence is weak.

Restitution: The therapeutic value of restitution, when it is feasible, is often strong, as long as it is in within reasonable limits. (She pays for the checks, the fur

Restitution: - (Cont.)

coat, or for the property she damaged. She has very real and practical knowledge that she made a mistake.)

There are two other goals for the treatment of any offender, juvenile or adult, which CAN be reached within an institutional setting, and are much more significant to the long-range measure of success.

Rehabilitation or Problem Solving:

The ONLY satisfactory test of treatment are Change and/or Adjustment. Has the person CHANGED, in both attitude and action? Has the person ADJUSTED, at least changing enough to live a reasonable, good life, within acceptable limits of his society? Institution programs can assist the individual in their care to want change, to understand the things which resulted in his being there, and to make him desire more from his own life, more than any institution could provide. With the individual problem on its way to solution, our next obligation is to help that individual adjust to the actual society to which he will return.

Any program which does not involve the problem-solving concept of treatment on a consistent basis, is not meeting the goal which is primary to today's concept of professional corrections.

Prevention:

Although this is not normally considered as part of the field of corrections, I firmly believe that it is one of the fundamental goals of a treatment program. Prevention occurs before a crime is committed, and you do not prevent crime by sentencing an individual as the crime has already taken place. The rate of recidivism, (the multiple offender who has already served a previous

Prevention: - (Cont.)

sentence) is often used to determine the success of treatment. There are too many intervening influences possible to make this a good test and it is not a fair yardstick.

I do believe that some of the obligation of the correctional program is to prevent the person who will not, or cannot change his behavior patterns from returning to the community - even if it means taking him back to court to accomplish it. I believe that we can attempt to prevent a multiple offender from receiving a new sentence for the same problem as he had before (problem-solving again). I think it is possible to prevent the young and novice offender from wanting bigger and better offenses identified with his name. I believe we have an obligation to prevent total dependence upon institutions, which is so easily encouraged by being in one longer than necessary. With regard to these areas, I consider prevention an important goal of an institutional program.

THE TWO FACILITIES NOW SERVING THE FEMALE OFFENDER, SKOWHEGAN AND HALLOWELL

THE STEVENS SCHOOL at Hallowell, is located on a beautiful site at the top of a hill, with 105 acres of property. It was built originally in 1875, by a private organization, to serve as a facility for delinquent juvenile girls. In 1889, the State of Maine assumed responsibility for the school, and although its legal name has changed many times, it is still the only facility designated by the State for the confinement of juvenile girls. A girl nine years old could be committed (seldom is one received who is less than 12), as well as any girl who has not yet completed her 16th birthday. The average age of admission is 14 years, 8 months. Once committed, the Superintendent of the school becomes the legal guardian of the child until she reaches the age of twenty-one, (21), unless discharged prior to that time in accord with statutory provisions. There are few limits to the possibilities of treatment for these children, and the statutes defining the obligations of the program are most useable for today's concept of treatment. There is not money available to implement all program needs, particularly those related to staff, but this situation is gradually improving.

There are three new buildings, one a gymnasium, opened late in 1966, and two new dormitories, opened in January, 1968. A fourth new building, another dormitory, is just at the point of construction. This should be habitable by early winter of 1969. The next legislature will be asked to replace another dormitory, which will put the majority of student-living areas up to the desirable standards for health, sanitation, and adequate treatment of the juvenile.

In addition to the above dormitories, there is an Academic School Building (approved school by the State Board of Education); an Administration Building, which is in process of renovation at present; one dormitory (built in 1930's) which is in fair condition and useable; four

STEVENS SCHOOL - (Cont.)

staff residential facilities, (one of which was forced into service as a Halfway House during the past year); and buildings to service the mechanics of the institution (boiler plant, shops, etc.).

The property is most irregular in shape, with parts of it extending across the turnpike as well as across a city street. One side of the property abuts the new residential park area, and private residences are immediately adjacent to the main part of the institution. Buildings are required to be at totally different levels due to cliff-type drops in the terrain.

Intake at the School does not fluctuate greatly from year to year, and the average daily population for an extended period has been approximately 110 students. The highest count for any one day in the past ten years was in MARCH, 1967, when there were 154 girls in residence on the grounds.

THE WOMEN'S CORRECTIONAL CENTER, at Skowhegan, is located on a beautiful site, above the town, on a gradual hill.

The property slopes gently down to the Kennebec River. There are two hundred eighty (280) acres of land to the property, 100 of these cleared for use and the rest is woodland. It was built in 1915 as the Reformatory for Women, and is the only facility for the adult female offender in the State. Girls can be committed here if they are over the age of sixteen (there is a one year overlap between here and Stevens, used at the discretion of the sentencing Judge). There is no age limit on State Prison offenders. Any girl over the age of 15, who is incorrigible within the Stevens School, can be transferred to Skowhegan with the approval of the Commissioner of Mental Health and Corrections.

THE WOMEN'S CORRECTIONAL CENTER - (Cont.)

Of all admissions to the Women's Correctional Center since I have been affiliated here, 18% have been transfers from Stevens, 7% have been State Prison Commitments, and 75% are women and girls sentenced directly to the Women's Correctional Center. With all residents considered, the median age is 19 years, 4 months. If the State Prison offenders are omitted, the median age falls to slightly over eighteen (18) years.

The majority of the buildings are quite old, and the main inmate resident building has been frequently recommended for replacement. There is one small security unit for problem cases, and one Administration Building to accommodate program, administration and business offices. Two houses are available to accommodate all live-in staff. Two other wooden structures are used for the community-oriented program, of work-release and Halfway House program. These last two buildings are not safe for the security requirements of inmates, but in an open program, (with elbow grease, energy and paint) they are kept attractive and use-able for those not requiring custody.

The property is oblong in shape, with the river on one side, farm land and fields on two sides, and the wooded area in the rear. It is just at the edge of the town limits of Skowhegan, one mile from the town activities.

Intake at the Women's Correctional Center has shown a gradual but consistent increase since the 1950's, with more use of the facility by the courts. Until 1962, the daily population average had been consistently around seventy (70) for many years. The average daily population now has decreased to approximately fifty (50). The highest count for any one day in the past five years was in the spring of 1966, when there were 68 girls and women in residence.

THE WOMEN'S CORRECTIONAL CENTER - (Cont. )

Women and girls are staying at the facility for much shorter periods of time, with parole opportunities made possible as soon as the girl seems ready for it. The rate of return for either Parole Violations or for a new offense (recidivist) is lower than any other institution in the State, as well as being among the lowest in the Country as a whole. The Halfway House program is a major contribution factor to this. Since its opening in 1963, more than 125 women and girls (most of them teenagers) were released from actual institution custody and program to Parole or Entrustment status through the Halfway House program. As of this writing, with more than five years of operation, not one of these women or girls has been returned on a new charge, either to our facility or any other one known to us.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A PROFESSIONAL APPROACH TO TREATMENT

### OF THE FEMALE OFFENDER.

The following are some major recommendations for improving the over-all treatment of the female offender, both juvenile and adult. They are not in any priority order - they are ALL NEEDED NOW, for us to do the job that we were hired to do, and for which we are trained.

### A DIAGNOSTIC, RECEPTION AND TREATMENT CENTER FOR JUVENILES

Today, in the State of Maine, what resources are available to any Judge to assist him in making a disposition on a juvenile case which will be most helpful, (or least harmful) to the child and still protect the best interest of both the child and the community? Only one county offers even minimal service.

A diagnostic team of trained specialists, combining all that they can learn about the child, could give a valid interpretation of the child and his problems to the Judge BEFORE disposition of any case was determined. The Judge would then determine how to best implement any recommendations.

Most juvenile offenders do not need detention facilities prior to their appearance in court. For the few acting-out and disturbed children who might need emergency confinement, such a center could be most appropriate. Children should not be in jails. Training Centers for juveniles should NOT BE USED as jails.

At the present time, there are too many admissions to our juvenile institution which could have successfully been treated in the community. The initial diagnostic work-up of a committed child could avoid actual admission to a training center if it were not necessary. (Institutional care is by far the most expensive form of treatment possible.)

At both juvenile training centers, there is the occasional child who is totally disrupting to the institution program, cannot be motivated into helping himself, and takes extended time of staff in just controlling behavior, to the detriment of the rest of the population. The alternatives possible at present are complete segregation (solving the immediate institution problem, but not helping the child) or transfer to an adult institution. Most of these children are not psychotic, but severe behavior problems. Such a center could use a treatment-team approach, give the individual attention, and possibly assist in making a productive young adult.

Such a Diagnostic, Reception, and Treatment Center, should be as centrally located in the State as possible, have direct transportation routes from all areas of the State, should be near colleges, hospitals, mental health agencies, and other community resources as might be needed.

I STRONGLY RECOMMEND that the present physical plant of STEVENS SCHOOL, at HALLOWELL be used for such a center. It meets the requirements as stated above. The new buildings opened this year, as well as those to be built, would all be appropriate with very little modification, to such a center. It is not necessary to have a residential institution in the heart of a town; it is not practical to have a residential institution sitting on a turnpike.

A SINGLE CORRECTIONAL CENTER FOR FEMALE OFFENDERS,

BOTH JUVENILE AND ADULT.

As Superintendent of both the Women's Correctional Center, at Skowhegan, and the Stevens School, at Hallowell, for over a year now, I would firmly endorse the two programs be merged on a single campus. It would require adequate separation of the very young from the more mature; the tractable child or girl from the problem case, and careful screening prior to making a decision about program and housing for each individual.

Personnel costs make up almost 75% of each institution's budget request, and it is felt that many positions and areas of program would not have to be duplicated. All services, including plant maintenance, purchasing, business office operation, stores, laundry, and administration as a whole, could function at a much less expensive and more effective level, if combined under one roof.

Sixteen and seventeen year old girls, now at Skowhegan, have the same problems as the sixteen and seventeen year olds at Hallowell; and it takes the same tools of treatment to help them reach successful maturity.

Certain women, now serving their sentences at Skowhegan, could have an alternate plan established at the time of conviction, which would make the combination center much more effective. This would require statutory changes before implementation:

STATE PRISON OFFENDERS: Although only 13 women were admitted at Skowhegan with State Prison Sentences in a seven year period; these women were basically much more mature than the rest of the population, were much older by age and experience than the others. I would recommend that if the facilities are combined that all women, with offenses which now result in a sentence to the Maine State Prison, be transferred through the Interstate Compact, to serve their sentences in another state.

CHRONIC ALCOHOLIC OFFENDERS: The major problem of almost all of the more mature inmates now at Skowhegan, is that of drinking too much. Most of the offenses are related directly to drinking, or crimes committed while under the influence of alcohol. If this group were eliminated from the new combined population, the entire program could be geared toward the child and young adult, all youthful offenders.

At NO time could I recommend that a woman or girl be sentenced to a jail, IF THERE IS ANY CONSIDERATION GIVEN TO TREATING HER. The number is too small to have any effective program, and would result in the individual eventually being sent to us at a later date, with even more problems to solve.

The residential setting of a correctional institution should NOT be in the heart of a city; should NOT be sitting over a turnpike; SHOULD offer natural security by its location, and have enough property to allow adequate separation of its population.

Because of the above, I STRONGLY RECOMMEND that the facility, now serving as the site for the Women's Correctional Center at SKOWHEGAN, be used for the combined correctional services for women and girls.

## STATE-WIDE EXPANSION OF THE HALFWAY HOUSE PROGRAM.

To teach any individual to live acceptably in a normal community, you MUST EXPOSE THEM to the community. The Halfway House Program, completely community oriented, is considered to be one of the most effective tools of treatment for the individual who has been in an institution and has no person or situation in the community to offer them security.

You cannot wholly treat an individual within an institution setting, and expect him to go out with normal values or expectations. Everyone does not need the Halfway House experience - it is for those who need more than just a job or acceptance in a public school, it is for learning acceptable family living habits while still pulling his own load in the community.

Halfway House is just that - it is half-way back to normal living; not run like an institution, and not quite the complete freedom of civilian status.

The existing statutes permit expansion of this program to anywhere within the State of Maine. No new buildings are requested, and not much capital investment. Primarily the requirements will be for leasing property and staff supervision. It is much less expensive to supervise a woman or girl in this status than in an institution proper. If working, they pay room and board and all their personal bills as any other citizen.

Right now, Halfway House means half-way out; it could be extended to be half-way in. Some young women may need protective and supervised living to avert them from getting into more trouble. Some of these may not need to have the supervision of a correctional institution. Residing in Halfway House could be a condition of probation as well as part of the after-care of parole or entrustment.

## AFTER-CARE FOR ALL JUVENILES

Community supervision is the most vital tool to the effective treatment of the offender. Regardless of the opportunities and growth which can be accomplished while in an institution, the GOAL for each of these children is successful return to the community as soon as it is possible.

The after-care services now available for boys should also be extended to the girls of our State. There are just not enough Probation and Parole Officers available to do the job that needs doing; there are not enough hours in the day. Whether this is a separate program into itself, be a part of total after-care of juveniles, or be an entirely new program for over-all supervision of juveniles on probation as well as entrustment, must be determined. What ever is done, AN AFTER-CARE PROGRAM IS URGENTLY NEEDED.

## OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

There is much to be considered for the improvement of the over-all field of corrections in the State of Maine. Only major areas concerned with the female offender have been covered in this report. Other groups and committees will be presenting recommendations for an over-all change in our approach to treating any offender, male or female, child or adult. Some of these will include the strengthening of our central organization, improving and encouraging community involvement in correctional programs, staff development programs, and educational opportunities which must become available for both those sentenced to our institutions and for those staff who are working with these offenders.

I hope I have made you interested in knowing more about our business. There is much more to talk about. My own personal "life in crime" has almost extended to two decades now, and I feel that goals can be reached, and that working in this field can be most rewarding.

I would be most pleased to discuss any of these recommendations, or other ideas related to my favorite cause, the ENTIRE FIELD OF CORRECTIONS.

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